

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
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AMEMBASSY TUNIS
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, AG, SS
SUBJECT: SAHARA: SAHRAOUI REPUBLIC AND POLISARIO

1. AS 1977 OPENS, WORTHWHILE TO TAKE STOCK, BRIEFLY AND
ON BASIS OF LIMITED INFORMATION, OF WHERE "SAHRAOUI
REPUBLIC" (SDAR) AND POLISARIO STAND ORGANIZATIONALLY,
MILITARILY AND DIPLOMATICALLY.

2. ORGANIZATION: SDAR AND POLISARIO DO NOT HAVE
EXTENSIVE ORGANIZATION BUT SEEM CAPABLE OF DOING JOBS
THEY HAVE ASSIGNED THEMSELVES. JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE
VISITED SAHARA FIND TOP-LEVEL SDAR AND POLISARIO OFFICIALS
TO BE DEDICATED AND REASONABLY COMETENT, IF YOUTHFUL,
CROWD. LOWER-LEVEL "MILITANTS" LESS CAPABLE OR SERIOUS.
POLISARIO SEEMS CAPABLE OF HANDLING ITS PRINCIPAL
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ADMINISTRATIVE TASK--ADMINISTRATION OF 18 OR SO REFUGEE
CAMPS IN TINDOUF REGION-- WITH LITTLE OR NO GOA
INTERFERENCE ALTHOUGH GOA CONTINUES TO MEET MOST OF
CAMPS' MATERIAL NEEDS. SDAR SO-CALLED GOVERNMENT ONLY
SHADOW AND REFLECTS ALGERIAN TACTIC OF PROCLAIMING
EXISTENCE OF BODY AND ONLY AFTERWARD SCRAMBLING TO
GIVE IT LIFE AND SUBSTANCE.

3. POLITICALLY, SDAR AND POLISARIO LEADERS

CONTINUE TO RAVEL WIDELY AND TO ATTEMPT TO SELL THEIR CAUSE. ALTHOUGH THIS EFFORT LESS THAN SUCCESSFUL IN CONCRETE DIPLOMATIC TERMS, IT AT LEAST DEEPS "SAHRAOUI CAUSE" SOMEWHAT IN PUBLIC EYE. OF LATE, POLISARIO HAS MADE CONSIDERABLE PROPAGANDA SPLASH BY TAKING JOURNALISTS ON TOURS OF "LIBERATED AREAS" AND ALLOWING THEM TO OBSERVE GUERRILLA ATTACKS ON MOROCCAN POSITIONS. THIS WRINKLE HAS PROVOKED SOME INTEREST AMONG JOURNALISTS WHO WERE GROWING TIRED OF STANDARD TINDOUF REFUGEE CAMP STORY.

4. MILITARY: AT THIS TIME, POLISARIO ON ONE HAND, AND MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS ON OTHER, SEEM TO HAVE ARRIVED AT A KIND OF MILITARY STANDOFF. POLISARIO GUERRILLA BANDS, NOW BETTER EQUIPPED THAN IN PAST, ARE ABLE TO MOVE IN DESERT MORE OR LESS AT WILL AND TO CONDUCT SMALL-SCALE AMBUSHES. GUERRILLAS' SUCCESSES, SUCH AS DOWNING OF MOROCCAN FOUGA AND MAURITANIAN DEFENDER AIRCRAFT AND ATTACK ON MAURITANIAN IRON ORE TRAIN, GIVE IMPRESSION OF POLISARIO VITALITY. CAPTURED MORROCAN PILOT TOLD PRESS IN TINDOUF THAT MOROCCANS HAVE LOST SIX PLANES-- 2 F-5S, 3 T-6S AND ONE FOUGA--IN FIGHTING SO FAR.

5. HOWEVER, POLISARIO ASSERTIONS AND CLAIMS OF VAST "GENERAL OFFENSIVE" TO CONTRARY, WE SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT GUERRILLAS ARE CAPABLE OF ESCALATING FIGHTING. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RECENT ACCOUNTS BY VISITING JOURNALISTS SUGGEST THAT SAME ORGANIZATIONAL DEFIDIENCIES IN COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORT, ETC. NOTED SIX MONTHS AGO, WILL PREVENT POLISARIO FROM RAISING LEVEL OF VIOLENCE.

6. DIPLOMACY: IN AREA OF INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY, SDAR AND POLISARIO CAUSE HAS SUFFERED. SO FAR, ALGERIANS AND SAHRAOUI AHVE BEEN UNABLE TO IMPLEMENT MUTED UNGA ENDORSEMENT OF SPECIAL OAU SMMIT ON SAHARA, AND AFRICANS APPEAR RELUCTANT TO PURSUE IT DESPITE ALGERIAN AND SAHRAOUI URGING. THUS, SAHARA APPARENTLY NOT EVEN DISCUSSED AT RECENTLY CONCLUDED OAU MINISTERIAL IN KINSHASA. EVEN ANGOLAN HEALTH MINISTER, WHO VISITED HERE IN DECEMBER DID NOT MENTION SAHARA IN HIS REMARKS TO PRESS. SUCH A COMMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN NORMAL A FEW MONTHS AGO.

7. IN ARAB FORUMS, SAHRAOUI CAUSE HAS ALSO NOT PROSPERED. EVEN THOUGH FIGHTING ON THEIR

OWN TURF, ALGERIANS FAILED TO GET SAHRAOUI ACCREDITED AS MEMBERS OF ARAB JOURNALISTS UNION AND COMMUNIQUE WHICH FOLLOWED THAT ORGANIZATION'S RECENT MEETING IN ALGIERS DID NOT MENTION SAHARA. SAHARA ALSO DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE COME UP AT ARAB CULTURE MINISTERS CONFERENCE IN AMMAN. ONLY ARAB RECENTLY WHO HAS BEEN WILLING TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED WITH POLISARIO IS PDFLP'S NAYEF HAWATMEH DURING HIS YEAR-END VISIT TO ALGIERS.

8. COMMENT: BOUTEFLIKA'S REJECTION OF SUDI MEDIATION EFFORT SUGGESTS ALGERIAN INTENTION TO STAY WITH STATUS QUO IN SAHARA FOR IMMEDIATE FUTURE. APPEARS TO US THAT SDAR AND POLISARIO CAPABLE OF HOLDING UP THEIR END OF THIS STATUS, AT LEAST MILITARILY. LYNE

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